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ABSTRACT

The chief of these services at the Library of Congress suggests that international library service for blind and physically handicapped persons be discussed at the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) meeting in Brussels in September 1977. Discussion would focus on the development of a proposal that IFLA establish a working group devoted to the coordination of library services for blind and physically handicapped individuals, and the following service and technical concerns: (1) development of an international inventory of library resources; (2) the need for identification and standardization of existing production formats; (3) development of an effective international interlibrary loan mechanism; and (4) the need for a coordinated application of existing and future technologies to production requirements. (Author/AP)

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A PROPOSAL
for
INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION
of
LIBRARY SERVICE FOR BLIND AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED INDIVIDUALS

by

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To Be Discussed
International Federation of Library Associations
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Introduction

Access to information is vital if an individual is to function effectively in our rapidly developing society. Blind and physically handicapped individuals require the same accessibility as their sighted and nonhandicapped associates to data and other processed material if they are to operate personally and professionally without disadvantage.

Librarians have a responsibility to provide information in a usable form to all people. Librarians serving blind and physically handicapped individuals share this responsibility, and thus have the duty to provide data and information in appropriate tactile, recorded, and other pertinent formats.

The question before librarians, therefore, is how the information transfer process can operate effectively at local, national, and international levels. How best can librarians serve their clients who have a need for information in special formats?

Proposal

I suggest that the time is right to address at the international level library service for blind and physically handicapped people. Further, I suggest that the development of common technical and service guidelines is of prime

importance and that the International Federation of Library Associations is the organization to serve as the coordinating body.

Background

For many years library service for blind and physically handicapped individuals has had nearly as many organizational locations as there are nations. Many countries consider the service an adjunct of its welfare services and some place it in the library orbit; some utilize private organizations as service points and some utilize the public sector. I suggest that organizational placement within any specific country is irrelevant. At the same time I suggest that it is mandatory that coordination be effected within the broad scope of the library and information-science community.

Library service for the handicapped has the same philosophical base as that for the nonhandicapped. Many of the service and technical approaches are identical; those not identical are quite closely allied. Although providing appropriate library material for blind and handicapped people has necessitated the utilization of mechanical, electrical, and electronic engineering disciplines, the medium selected must be related to service and library philosophy.

Therefore, library service should be addressed by an organization of librarians such as IFLA rather than by an organization devoted to the welfare of the blind.

Action

Two levels of discussion will take place during the 1977 International Federation of Library Associations meeting. The first area of discussion will be concerned with developing a proposal that IFLA establish a working group devoted to the coordination of library services for blind and physically handicapped individuals. The second area will address the following service and technical concerns:

1. The development of an international inventory of library resources;

2. The need for identification of existing production formats;

3. The need for standardization of production formats;

4. The development of an effective international interlibrary loan mechanism; and

5. The need for a coordinated application of existing and future technologies to production requirements.

Conclusion

It is essential that librarians serving blind and physically handicapped individuals consider the points and suggestions noted in preceding paragraphs and come together in Brussels prepared to take the first step toward integrating their service into the mainstream of library activity.